

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4847

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 17118

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, TH CB

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN TROOPS ATTACK THAI BORDER VILLAGES

REF: A) USDAO BANGKOK 1054, B) BANGKOK 15986 C) BANGKOK 16224
D) BANGKOK 2351

SUMMARY: CAMBODIAN SOLDIERS ATTACKED THREE THAI BORDER
VILLAGES AUGUST 2 KILLING 28 AND WOUNDING NEARLY 50 THAI
CIVILIANS. RTG HAS LODGED STRONGLY WORDED PROTEST. THAI
PRESS HAS BEGAN TO CALL FOR STRONG ACTION AGAINST CAMBODIA.
END SUMMARY.

1. AN ESTIMATED FORCE OF 100 KHMER ROUGE (KR) TROOPS
ATTACKED THREE THAI VILLAGES LOCATED APPROXIMATELY ONE
KILOMETER FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER IN TA PHRAYA DISTRICT
OF PRACHINBURI PROVINCE AT 0200 AUGUST 2. BANGKOK PRESS OF
AUGUST 3 GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE INCIDENT AND
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REPORTED THAI CASUALTIES AT ONE BORDER PATROL POLICE
(BPP) AND 28 CIVILIANS KILLED AND SEVEN BPP AND 45
VILLAGERS WOUNDED. THE ATTACKERS ALSO REPORTEDLY SET
FIRE TO HOUSES AND DESTROYED PROPERTY BEFORE
WITHDRAWING FROM THE AREA AT APPROX 0630.

2. THE INCIDENT MARKS THE THIRD BORDER CLASH BETWEEN

THAI AND CAMBODIAN FORCES IN PAST TWO WEEKS (REFTELS B AND C) AND REPRESENTS THE BLOODIEST ENCOUNTER SINCE LAST JANUARY 28 WHEN KR FORCES KILLED AN ESTIMATED 32 THAI VILLAGERS IN ARANYAPRATHET DISTRICT OF PRACHINBURI (REFTEL D).

3. RTA REINFORCEMENTS FROM THE 3RD BATTALION, 2ND REGIMENT IN ARANYAPRATHET MOVED INTO THE TA PHRAYA AREA ON THE MORNING AUGUST 2 FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON THE VILLAGES BUT APPARENTLY MADE NO SIGNIFICANT CONTACT WITH KR FORCES. RTA ALSO REPORTEDLY FIRED ARTILLERY AT SUSPECTED KR POSITIONS ALONG THE BORDER NEAR TA PHRAYA AND ARANYAPRATHET DISTRICTS. AROUND NOON AUGUST 2 EMBASSY OFFICER AND EA/VCL DIRECTOR BROWN, ON LONG-PLANNED VISIT TO ARANYAPRATHET REFUGEE CAMP WHICH HAD BEEN PLANNED BEFORE RECENT INCIDENT, OBSERVED RTA GUNNERS OCCASIONALLY FIRING ROUNDS TOWARD BORDER AREA FROM TWO 105 HOWITZERS LOCATED APPROXIMATELY THREE KILOMETERS FROM REFUGEE CAMP (SITE OF TA PHRAYA CLASH IS APPROXIMATELY 60 KM FROM TWON OF ARANYAPRATHET).

4. MOTIVE BEHIND KR ATTACKS IS UNCLEAR. THAI AUTHORITIES, WHILE CLEARLY ANGERED, CONTINUE TO INDICATE A WILLINGNESS TO RESUME DIALOGUE AT ARANYAPRATHET-POIPET LIAISON OFFICE OVER BORDER PROBLEM WITH CAMBODIANS. BORDER LIAISON OFFICER AT
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ARANYAPRATHET AND DISTRICT OFFICIALS TOLD BROWN AND EMBOFF THAT CAMBODIANS HAVE REFUSED TO DISCUSS ANY OF THE RECENT INCIDENTS. THAI MFA OFFICIAL TOLD BROWN AND EMBOFF AUGUST 3 THAT RTG HAS LODG PROTEST OVER TA PHRAYA INCIDENT THROUGH EMBASSIES IN PEKING AND VIENTIANE AS WELL AS AT THE UN. MFA OFFICIAL SAID TA PHRAYA CLASH DIFFERED FROM PREVIOUS INCIDENTS WHICH OCCURRED IN ARANYAPRATHET DISTRICT, IN THAT THE CAMBODIANS HAVE NEVER DISPUTED ACCURACY OF THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDERLINE AT TA PHRAYA DURING PAST DISCUSSIONS OF BORDER ISSUES, WHERE AS IN THE CASE OF ARANYAPRATHET, CAMBODIAN OFFICIALS HAD INDICATED DISAGREEMENT WITH RTG OVER DEMARCATION OF BOUNDARY. MFA SOURCE STATED THAT RAIDS ON VILLAGES IN TA PHRAYA MAY HAVE BEEN IN RETALIATION FOR RTA ARTILLERY SHELLINGS IN BORDERING AREA OF CAMBODIA FOLLOWING CLASH NEAR ARANYAPRATHET JULY 21 (REFTEL B).

5. THE HIGH TOLL OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN TO PHRAYA INCIDENT HAS AROUSED ANGER AND ANXIETY AMONG THE THAI PUBLIC AND HAS STIRRED DEMANDS FROM THE PRESS FOR THE RTG TO TAKE SOME SORT OF RETALIATORY ACTION. HOWEVER, AS MFA OFFICIAL IN BANGKOK NOTED AUG 3, THAI

SECURITY FORCES HAVE NEITHER THE STRENGTH NOR THE
MANPOWER ADEQUATELY TO PATROL AND PROTECT THE ENTIRE
LENGTH OF THE CAMBODIAN BORDER. HE FEARS A
RETALIATORY MOVE BY THE RTA COULD PROMPT MORE RAIDS
BY THE KR ON POORLY DEFENDED THAI BORDER VILLAGES.
CONSEQUENTLY, MFA IS URGING A MODERATE RESPONSE,
PRESUMABLY NOT RPT. NOT INVOLVING MILITARY FORCE.
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